

## The Weston A. Price Foundation

# Researchers who Lie, Cheat and Steal . . . and the Journal that Exposes Them

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JANUARY 27, 2012 BY KAAYLA DANIEL ([HTTPS://WWW.WESTONAPRICE.ORG/AUTHOR/KDANIEL/](https://www.westonaprice.org/author/kdaniel/))

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The latest news from the *British Medical Journal* is bad but hardly surprising. A survey of 2,700 doctors and scientists revealed 13 percent have witnessed colleagues altering or fabricating data during their research. That manipulation has included “inappropriately adjusting, excluding, altering or fabricating data.”

The *BMJ* further revealed that 6 percent of scientists and doctors think their own institutions are not properly investigating possible misconduct. In many cases, junior academics who might object are told to keep concerns to themselves if they wish to protect their careers, bullied into not publishing their findings, or had their contracts terminated when they spoke out.

Given that a 2001 *BMJ* study reported similar “misconduct,” the problem clearly isn’t going away on its own.

The findings were presented January 12 in the UK at a meeting cosponsored by the *BMJ* and by the International Committee on Publications Ethics (COPE). It included senior representatives from academia, government, funding agencies, and journals, who agreed individual researchers should have high ethical standards, but employing institutions have the prime responsibility of ensuring research conducted within their walls is honestly performed and reported.

selective publishing of research to avoid publishing disappointing results or the complete failure to publish any results from a study. Sadly, this is considered by many researchers today to be “business as usual.”

Why does so much of this happen? In today’s “publish or perish” culture, some researchers will do almost anything needed to get ahead. Another common reason is “checkbook research” in which data and conclusions are manipulated, massaged or omitted to please sponsors. Whatever the reason or reasons, junior academics who might object are advised to keep concerns to themselves if they wish to protect their careers, bullied into not publishing their findings, or fired for speaking out.

Liz Wager, PhD, a freelance writer and editor who serves as chair of COPE, concluded in her *BMJ* Blog that “problems in reporting research studies distort the scientific literature and provide an unreliable base for the development of systematic reviews and clinical practice guidelines.” Furthermore, while “plagiarism may be a nasty symptom of a sick system, it has probably never killed anybody while unreliable guidelines and misguided research undoubtedly have.”

*BMJ* Editor in Chief Dr. Fiona Godlee believes, “UK science and medicine deserve better,” and “doing nothing is not an option.” Although she conceded the survey fails to provide a full estimate of how much research misconduct takes place in the UK, it proves there are a “substantial number of cases” and institutions are “failing to investigate adequately if at all.”

In their *BMJ* editorial, Dr. Richard Lehman of Oxford University, and Dr. Elizabeth Loder, the journal’s clinical epidemiology editor, added, “A large proportion of evidence from human trials is unreported and much of what is reported is done so inadequately. We are not dealing here with trial design, hidden bias, or problems of data analysis — we are talking simply about the absence of data. And this is no academic matter, because missing data about harm in trials can harm patients, and incomplete data about benefit can lead to futile costs to health systems. Moreover, researchers or others who deliberately conceal trial

These are all excellent suggestions, especially the last. Those of us who review studies need to be able to look at raw data to judge the quality of a study and the accuracy of its conclusions for ourselves. As public watchdogs, we too can help journals and researchers stay honest and accountable.

That said, it's most interesting that the *BMJ* — a respected whistleblower on research misconduct for many years — itself chose to play a primary role in the smearing of Dr. Andrew Wakefield, whose controversial research connecting vaccinations and autism has proved highly troubling for the future profits of Big Pharm

Given that numerous independent researchers and doctors have found troubling links, high-quality, independent research is clearly needed. That, of course, is exactly what Dr. Wakefield recommended. Media accusations to the contrary, he never claimed to have established clear cause and effect. As he wrote in the Discussion section of the *Lancet* paper, "We did not prove an association between measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine and the syndrome described" and the last paragraph of the study he adds, "We have identified a chronic enterocolitis in children that may be related to neuropsychiatric dysfunction. In most cases, onset of symptoms was after measles, mumps, and rubella immunisation. Further investigations are needed to examine this syndrome and its possible relation to this vaccine."

In fact a substantial body of credible research published since 1998 — listed on Dr. Mercola's website and available at medical libraries — suggests the validity of Dr. Wakefield's concerns.

Yet another reason to mistrust the *BMJ* expose is its failure to disclose that since 2008 both *BMJ* and *The Lancet* have been in lucrative partnerships with Merck. This is clearly a serious conflict of interest and breach of ethics.

Truth cannot be suppressed so *BMJ* may well find itself in the embarrassing position of having boldly pointed one finger at disreputable researchers with three other fingers pointing back

Tavare A. Institutions must do more to eliminate research misconduct, meeting hears. *BMJ*. 2012 Jan 16;344:e446. doi: 10.1136/**bmj**.e446. No abstract available.

<http://www.bmj.com/rapid-response/2012/01/07/re-research-misconduct-uk>

<http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/category/liz-wager/>

Wakefield's article linking MMR vaccine and autism was fraudulent, *BMJ* 2011; 342:c7452 (Published 5 January 2011). <http://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.c7452>

"BMJ & Lancet Wedded to Merck CME Partnership," Alliance for Human Research Protection, 14 February 2011 <http://www.ahrp.org/cms/content/view/766/9/>  
<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2011/02/07/new-research-shows-link-between-mmr-vaccine-and-autism.aspx>

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## About Kaayla Daniel

Kaayla T. Daniel, PhD, CCN, is The Naughty Nutritionist™ because of her ability to outrageously and humorously debunk nutritional myths. A popular guest on radio and television, she has appeared on The Dr.

Oz Show, ABC's View from the Bay, NPR's People's Pharmacy and numerous other shows. Her own radio show, "Naughty Nutrition with Dr. Kaayla Daniel," launches April 2011 on World of Women Radio.

Dr. Daniel is the author of *The Whole Soy Story: The Dark Side of America's Favorite Health Food*, a popular speaker at Wise Traditions and other conferences, and recipient of its 2005

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